

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of successively displaying panels in a computer user interface, the method comprising:

displaying a first panel of a plurality of panels in a computer user interface, each of the panels including different information and the computer user interface having a plurality of navigation controls by which a user can navigate to any one of the panels to access its information, wherein a first setting of the navigation controls causes the first panel to be displayed;

receiving a user input requesting access to information on a second panel in the computer user interface, there being at least two different settings of the navigation controls that will cause the second panel to be displayed; and

ceasing to display the first panel and displaying the second panel using one of the at least two different settings by which more of the navigation controls remain unchanged from the first setting.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of panels is arranged in a hierarchy comprising nodes, and wherein the panels are located at a bottom of the hierarchy, and wherein the navigation controls allow the user to navigate by taking different paths in the hierarchy of nodes.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the first setting of the navigation controls correspond to a first path in the hierarchy of nodes and wherein the at least two settings of the navigation controls for causing display of the second panel correspond to respective at least two paths in the hierarchy of paths, and wherein the one path taken to the second panel is one having a lowest common node with the first path taken to the first panel.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein the first panel and the second panel are at a common level in the hierarchy.

5. The method of claim 2, wherein the first panel and the second panel are at different levels in the hierarchy.

6. The method of claim 2, wherein the navigation controls comprise tab sets each comprising a plurality of tabs, and tab set selection tabs for selecting between the tab sets, wherein a first tab is capable of triggering display of the first panel and at least a second tab and a third tab are capable of triggering display of the second panel.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein one of the second and third tabs that is part of a common tab set with the first tab is used to display the second view.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the user entered the information on the second panel before the first panel was displayed, and wherein displaying the second panel provides the user access to the entered information.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein an analysis of the information entered on the second panel prompted dispatch of a message relating to the entered information, the message containing a link to the second panel, wherein activating the link triggers a determination of which of the at least two settings of the navigation controls to use for displaying the second panel.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the message is one selected from the group consisting of: an error message, a warning message, an informational message, a confirmation message, and combinations thereof.

11. The method of claim 8, wherein an application program that includes the first and second panels was closed after the information was entered, and wherein the application program is opened before receiving the request to display the second panel, wherein displaying the second panel allows the user access to the information that was entered before the application program was closed.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of panels is arranged in a system of nodes that does not form a tree, and wherein the navigation controls allow the user to navigate by taking different paths in the hierarchy of nodes.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the first setting of the navigation controls correspond to a first path in the hierarchy of nodes and wherein the at least two settings of the navigation controls for causing display of the second panel correspond to respective at least two paths in the hierarchy of nodes, and wherein the one of the at least two paths to the second panel is used that has a common node with the first path to the first panel that is nearest the first panel.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein identifying the common node involves beginning with those of the nodes that are nearest the second panel in the system of nodes, and determining whether any of these nodes are common with any node in the first path.

15. A computer program product containing executable instructions that when executed cause a processor to:

display a first panel of a plurality of panels in a computer user interface, each of the panels including different information and the computer user interface having a plurality of navigation controls by which a user can navigate to any one of the panels to access its information, wherein a first setting of the navigation controls causes the first panel to be displayed;

receive a user input requesting access to information on a second panel in the computer user interface, there being at least two different settings of the navigation controls that will cause the second panel to be displayed; and

cease to display the first panel and display the second panel using one of the at least two different settings by which more of the navigation controls remain unchanged from the first setting.

16. The computer program product of claim 15, wherein the plurality of panels is arranged in a hierarchy comprising nodes, and wherein the panels are located at a bottom of the hierarchy, and wherein the navigation controls allow the user to navigate by taking different paths in the hierarchy of nodes wherein the first setting of the navigation controls correspond to a first path in the hierarchy of nodes and wherein the at least two settings of the navigation controls for causing display of the second panel correspond to respective at least two paths in the hierarchy of paths, further comprising instructions that when executed cause the processor to:

display the second panel using the one of the at least two paths that has a lowest common node with the first path taken to the first panel.

17. The computer program product of claim 15, further comprising instructions that when executed cause the processor to:

dispatch a message relating to information entered by the user on the second panel, the message containing a link to the second panel that when activated triggers a determination of which of the at least two settings of the navigation controls to use for displaying the second panel.

18. The computer program product of claim 15, wherein the panels are arranged in a system of nodes that does not form a tree, and wherein the navigation controls allow the user to navigate by taking different paths in the hierarchy of nodes, further comprising instructions that when executed cause the processor to:

begin with nodes nearest the second panel and determine whether any of these nodes are common with any node in a path by which the first panel was reached.